

1 **CAMDEN DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN WORKING GROUP**

2 **Minutes of Meeting**

3 **March 27, 2012**

4
5 **PRESENT:**

6
7 There were representatives from all of the organizations comprising the Town of
8 Camden's Team in attendance, as well as the four members of the Lachman Architects and
9 Planners Team, the Town's Development Director, Brian Hodges, and the Town's Planner, Steve
10 Wilson.

11
12 **1. PRESENTATION of the DRAFT CAMDEN DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN:**

13
14 The Lachman Team had submitted a 123 page "90%" Draft dated 3/26/2012, to Mr.
15 Hodges; copies had been sent to Working Group members for their review in preparation for this
16 meeting. (The Team has not yet completed the "Supplements" section.) The purpose of this
17 meeting is to go through the draft, offer comments, corrections, or suggestions to the Team for
18 the Final Draft that will be submitted to the Select Board the middle of April.

19
20 Mr. Lachman drew the group's attention to the slogan on the cover of the Plan: "*where*
21 **the Mountains meet Downtown & the Sea;**" this is intended to communicate the importance of
22 the downtown. He went through the structure of the Plan:

- 23
24 ♦ Preface: The intention is to put salient subject right up front and lay the foundation for
25 the Plan. The Preface contains the following components: The Common Vision –
26 founded in the Comprehensive Plan; the history of reaching a consensus regarding the
27 need for a revitalization plan for a year-round Downtown; and the charge to create a
28 cohesive strategy to set the stage for the future of a prosperous and vital downtown that
29 integrates the past; integrates *present* economic considerations and conditions, and sets
30 the stage for the future based on past recommendations, *current analysis* and future
31 trends.

32
33 The report is built around the cornerstones of Downtown Revitalization:
34 Economics, Streetscapes, Buildings and Citizen Participation. The Preface contains
35 summaries of each of those categories; it is intended that the Preface gives those who
36 don't want to examine the entire Plan sufficient information to understand the basic
37 process;

38
39 **Recommendation:** Brian Hodges, speaking for his advisory committee, CEDAC, spoke to the
40 opportunity they saw in reviewing the Plan: They recommend taking advantage of the Preface to
41 make people aware that there *are* opportunities for jobs to be created with the creation of a vital
42 downtown. They want to make it clear that the Master Plan is not a jobs plan, but they also
43 realize the concern people have about bringing jobs to Town; CEDAC would like to tie in the
44 possibility up front that jobs *can* result from a coordinated effort. The group agreed that simply
45 changing the lead in to Page 3 might serve the purpose of connecting future jobs to economic
46 development and the following language was suggested:

47 "Purpose & Goals of the Master Plan – "Set the Stage" for Prosperity and Vitality – That Means
48 Jobs!"

1 **Correction:** Page 3: *An Economic Vision for Camden* should not be attributed to CEDAC – the
2 study was requested by the Select Board.

3
4 **Discussion:** Martin Cates: The Select Board Chair responded to a question about the Budget
5 Committee's refusal to recommend TIF money be spent to support CEDAC's request for
6 implementing recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan: One member of the Committee
7 was very persuasive in their argument that the Town should not support the Plan in any way; he
8 did not want to give the Select Board authority to spend TIF dollars on a general request. The
9 Working Group agreed that the Budget Committee did not have the final say, and the Select
10 Board could be asked to add the funds back in to the budget that will go to Town Meeting in
11 June. Another tactic would be for CEDAC to spend time educating the public about the Plan,
12 and then try again -- perhaps even go to a special Town Meeting -- once the project can be more
13 fully described and linked to the Plan

14
15 **Recommendation:** TIF financing is a great tool to fund these projects: The Plan should call it
16 out more on Page 4 where the concept is introduced and describe the funding process set by the
17 State.

- 18
19 ◇ **Part 1: Introduction:** The Plan next includes an Introduction which covers the
20 following subjects: Assets & Challenges of Camden's Downtown; The Master Planning
21 Process & Citizen Participation; a Study Area Map; The Maine Downtown Center & the
22 Main Street Approach; and

23
24 An introduction to Funding Strategies & Action Items to inform readers that there are
25 answers to the first question everyone asks – How Do We Pay for This?

- 26
27 ▶ Chapter 1: Economic Revitalization Funding Strategies & Action Items: Rodney
28 Lynch addressed possible funding opportunities categorized for each of the nine
29 Economic Clusters he identified in the Downtown that can be leveraged to encourage
30 economic development: 1a) The Technology Economy; The Creative Economy
31 which includes: 1b) The Library Complex; 1c) a Movie Theater; and 1d) the Opera
32 House; 1e) The Events Economy; 1f) The Recreational Economy; 1g) The New
33 Business Growth Economy which discusses funding opportunities to capitalize an
34 Incubator Business Assistance Program and Strategies for Marketing the Town; 1h)
35 The Historic and Architecture Economy; and 1i) The Tourism and Visitors Economy.
- 36
37 ▶ Chapter 2: Streetscape, Circulation & Parking Funding Strategies & Action Items:
38 Regina Leonard took a different approach to presenting funding strategies for projects
39 falling under the general category of "Streetscape": She presented the first step -
40 Policy & Partnership strategies the Town can undertake – things that can make a
41 difference without incurring costs; the next steps are Action & Funding Strategies to
42 begin Survey, Design & Engineering studies followed by Implementation
43 (Construction). Most contained a possible budget amount as well as categories called
44 "Early Win" - less expensive projects that would have an immediate impact that the
45 Town could do on their own without looking for outside funding. This was
46 especially true of the category she call "Warm & Fuzzy Projects" that were meant to
47 help beautify the Town.

- 1 ▶ Chapter 3: Building Funding Strategies: Denis Lachman briefly described tax credits
2 available to assist with project funding in some historic properties. He informed the
3 group that he will elaborate on these possibilities in a presentation open to anyone
4 that will be held on April 17.

5
6 **Discussion:** The different formats for Chapters 1 and 2 led to confusion by readers:

7
8 1) It seemed like an explanation was needed describing the clusters in Chapter 1, especially, and
9 Members wondered if the order of the sections was the problem: Perhaps Part 1, funding
10 recommendations, should follow the full presentation of the subject in Part 3 so readers had been
11 made aware of the concept.

12 **Recommendation:** Add a cross-reference to the relevant chapter section “For More
13 Information.”

14
15 2) Members wondered if the layout of the two chapters should be similar - most found Chapter 2
16 easier to comprehend. Mr. Lachman asked Mr. Lynch if changing formats would suit his data,
17 and Mr. Lynch was not sure that it would – he would think about how to make this section easier
18 to understand.

19
20 3) Page 20: Members discussed whether or not including the goal to revisit the Harbor Bridge
21 was a “potential land mine.” It was agreed that this language is a true representation of the Goals
22 set by the Select Board; that the concept – once very popular with Downtown merchants and
23 citizens – still had strong support; and, that it should stay as an active Goal in the Plan.

- 24
25 ▶ Part 1: #4. Select Board Goals

26 **Recommendations:**

27 1. Move Select Board Goals 2012 (page 20) before the Action Item Chapters so it is clear that
28 many of the goals were set by the Select Board, and not created within the Plan. That order
29 would clearly tie the Select Board’s goals to the Plan. It was also recommended the wording be
30 changed to “Select Board Adopted Goals” to avoid confusion about overlapping timelines.

31
32 2. Add language to the Preface referring to implementing the Select Board’s goals
33

34 ♦ *Part 2: Chapter Summaries:*

- 35
36 ▶ Chapter 1 Summary - Economic Revitalization, Funding & Implementation: Rodney
37 Lynch

38 In this summary Mr. Lynch introduces the economic goals of the Plan, the process of
39 identifying the economic values that guide the Plan, the concept of Economic Development
40 Clusters, and how each cluster will be described and evaluated in the full Chapter.

41
42 **Recommendation:**

43 Take advantage of the language in the Introduction to introduce “jobs”: “The economic goals of
44 the Camden Downtown Master Plan are to provide a framework...for:

- 45 • ... attracting new businesses which means jobs
46 • strengthening existing businesses which means jobs
47
48

1 ‣ Chapter 2 Summary – Streetscapes, Circulation & Parking: Regina Leonard

2 The summary provides the rationale for making public investments in streetscapes,
3 signage, parking, pedestrian safety, and traffic improvements. She introduces the
4 recommendations she will discuss in detail in the full Chapter, and informs the reader these
5 recommendations respond to many sources including the Town’s own vision and economic
6 development studies conducted for the Town – these are not generic recommendations, but are
7 made with a solid local basis. She supports the public investment requirement for funding
8 improvements with findings from studies done specific to revitalizing Maine downtowns, and
9 she describes the steps the Town will need to take to implement the Plan’s recommended
10 improvements.

11 ‣ Chapter 3 Summary – Buildings: Denis Lachman

12 Mr. Lachman introduces the Property and Building Inventory, the Physical Data
13 Summary, and the Occupancy/Business Data Summary – all of which are detailed in the full
14 Chapter. He also notes the important, but under-utilized role the National Register Historic
15 Districts play as an asset to the Downtown.

16 ‣ Chapter 4 Summary – Citizen Participation:

17 The Chapter details the “Many Opportunities for Participation and High Engagement”
18 that was a goal of the Working Group: to gather significant input from many sources and provide
19 multiple opportunities for public participation. The Plan notes how the unusually high degree of
20 public engagement allowed the Plan to evolve quickly into answering “HOW” to revitalize
21 downtown, resulting in a Plan that was focused on the Hopes and Concerns of the citizens who
22 took the time to participate in the many ways that are described in this summary.
23

24 **Recommendation:**

25 Let readers know that they can obtain the full survey and results on the Town web site.
26

27 **Discussion:**

28 Barrie Pribyl: She wonders if there is the opportunity to rethink the Opera House proposal. She
29 suggests not moving forward with renovations to the third floor until they consider the use of the
30 first floor, and perhaps the creation of a movie theatre on the premises – the Opera House would
31 become a locus for entertainment. This is a way to maximize the energies now going separately
32 – one group for the Opera House and one group working on a movie theatre in the downtown.
33 She would take advantage of the synergy that could result from a project like this.
34

35 This evolved into a discussion about the need for conference break-out rooms that might also be
36 satisfied by an entire Opera House renovation, relocating the Town Office elsewhere. The Opera
37 House is the center of the campus concept that evolved as a result of the need to accommodate
38 larger groups at conferences.
39

40 **Recommendation:**

41 Ms. Pribyl wondered if the Economic Action Items in the Chapter 1 Summary reflect the
42 priorities of the Town; she suggested reordering the Creative Economy Cluster (page 22) and
43 putting the Opera House before the Movie Theater. All agreed that night time activities ranked
44 high as something with economic value.
45

Funding Opera House Renovations:

Mr. Lachman reminded the Group of his offer to hold a workshop on April 17 to discuss opportunities for funding renovations and upgrades to historic buildings. In addition to property owners, he suggested that representatives from business (bankers and realtors, e.g.,) non-profit organizations and other towns' officials could all benefit from the information. Mr. Hodges asked for help from the group in publicizing this workshop in light of the fact that the only local paper has folded.

◇ Part 3: Full Chapters

► Chapter 1: Economic Revitalization, Funding & Implementation: Rodney Lynch

Discussion/Recommendations/Corrections:

Page 64: Historic and Architecture Economy Cluster is 1h not 1g; and

Page 69: Tourist and Visitor Economy Cluster is 1i not 1h.

Page 65: There was discussion about whether or not to include the development of a Historic Ordinance in the list of Opportunities. Mr. Lynch noted that in order to access certain State funding this ordinance is a requirement. Mr. Hodges stated that he understood that the proposal to create such an ordinance in Camden met with strong opposition, and some in attendance thought that a different approach from the original proposal might be better received.

Page 69: In response to the question of why Tourism was left to the last when it is the most important economy in Town, Mr. Lynch responded that everything – all the other economies – lead here. Everything that is done otherwise will benefit this cluster, and vice versa.

► Chapter 2: Streetscapes, Parking & Circulation: Regina Leonard

Ms. Leonard introduces the Chapter by describing recent trends across the country regarding the rebirth of the downtown. These trends, and the research findings regarding successful revitalization efforts, are used to support the proposal to revitalize the physical downtown to encourage economic development.

The Chapter is divided into two parts – Streetscapes and Parking & Circulation – with a description of the specific problems and the opportunities to fix them for each, followed by very specific recommendations for improvements. In each instance she has attempted to provide the local facts (problems) and then discuss the rationale so readers can understand *why* the specific recommendations were being made. She also has suggested scenarios for future projects and outreach (page 87), and this is where the subject of the future of the Public Landing is broached. There will be one schematic included in the Supplemental Information section, and the Plan discusses some different options for changes. But, she explains, the redevelopment scenarios in the Plan do not include specific design recommendations.

The section contains lots of “Policy as Action” recommendations – the “Early Wins” described briefly in Part 2. It will be important to keeping community interest in the project to do some things right away to demonstrate progress toward the goals.

► Chapter 3: Buildings: Denis Lachman

Mr. Lachman noted that what he has attempted to do in this Chapter is to show what can be done with the different data bases he has developed on the occupancy and use, and the physical components of all the buildings in the covered area. There are examples of reports

1 included, detailed information on the buildings and uses, and pictures of all of the buildings; this
2 information can all be used to target market the Town's downtown.

3
4 **Corrections:**

5 Page 91: TIF is misspelled.

6 Page 95: The business "Guzzy's" should be "Cuzzy's" instead.

7 Page 119: The picture is out-dated: ABCD Books is no longer in business

8
9 ◇ **Part 4: Supplemental Information**

10 This section is not yet ready for review, but it will contain schematics of the Chapter 2
11 design recommendations and reference sources, among other things.

12
13 Further comments or corrections should be passed to the Team through Mr. Hodges and
14 received within the next two days so the Team can complete their revisions.

15
16 Mr. Hodges asked the Team what else they needed from Camden, and Mr. Lachman
17 replied that he believes the Team is ready to discuss the Plan with the Select Board next month.
18 Ms. Pribyl expressed the thoughts of the group when she commented that she was "stunned" by
19 the amount of data and the incredible job of organizing it into such a cohesive presentation.

20
21 **Recommendation:**

22 Pete Brown suggested that the term "revitalization" might be replaced with terms like
23 health and vitality in places – it is used a lot and if projects are seen as having the benefit of
24 increasing the health and vitality of the Town instead, it might produce a more positive reaction.

25
26 **Select Board Presentation:**

27 Mr. Lachman asked for any guidance the group might have regarding the presentation to
28 the Select Board. Martin Cates informed the Team that this would be the primary agenda item at
29 the April 17 meeting, and the purpose is informational only. The meeting will be broadcast and
30 the hope is that viewers will tune in to become informed about the Master Plan.

31
32 Members suggested providing a brief history of getting to this point. Using Ms.
33 Leonard's "breadcrumb" approach to enticing people by tossing them more and more detailed
34 bits of information would be a way to introduce the Plan; let viewers know that the Plan itself is
35 very detailed, and these are the kinds of things you can find within its pages. Repeating some of
36 the comments from the public forums – questions that had been asked and answered, or concerns
37 that had been heard and addressed reiterates the fact that the public has been involved at every
38 step. Members as a whole agreed that stressing the opportunities that existed for public input
39 and the degree to which people participated is very important to combating opponents who will
40 say this is being forced upon the Town.

41
42 Ms. Pribyl suggested using the comments from Page 2 of the Plan: It is a perfect
43 synopsis:

44
45 "...This Downtown Master Plan is a "capstone" to previous studies that accomplishes the
46 following:

47 1. Integrates the Past– builds on previous reports and studies by coordinating concepts into a
48 single comprehensive document.

1 2. Integrates Present Economic Considerations with Physical Conditions – no previous studies
2 integrated economic considerations with physical conditions to create a comprehensive whole –
3 essential for downtown revitalization.

4
5 3. Sets the Stage for the Future – a road map for the future based on past recommendations,
6 current analysis and future trends.”

7
8 Members agreed that the entire Preface hits the points that need to be made.
9

10 Mr. Hodges asked if he, or Ms. Finnigan, could assist in the presentation by introducing
11 the Team saying: “This is the Team we hired. In our estimation did they meet the contract? Yes;
12 in fact they exceeded the contract and the Town is getting an exceptional product.” The
13 Working Group discussed whether or not they would be authorized to make a formal Motion in
14 support, and did not believe they could; if they could they would send a unanimous vote of
15 endorsement. CEDAC and the Downtown Business Group don’t usually vote to endorse
16 proposals, but CEDAC is going to discuss doing so in this case at their next meeting, and the
17 CDBG may do the same – or at least put their stamp of approval on the Plan.
18

19 It was suggested that it be stressed that these were not “consultants that came to Town to
20 tell us what to do” – they were only the technicians who put to paper what they heard from
21 townspeople was important. It was suggested that everyone who can attend the meeting, and
22 perhaps they can just be recognized for their participation. That will help connect actual local
23 people to the work done.
24

25 Ms. Pribyl recommended that it be stressed that this Plan is not a “revolution”; it is
26 professional business as usual to adopt a strategic plan – that is all that this is and it is nothing to
27 worry about. Also it should be stressed that this is not all new ideas – the Plan is a compilation
28 of some old work that has already been accepted by the Town.
29

30 Mr. Lachman thanked all for their work – it has been a pleasure to work in Camden.
31

32
33 There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.
34

35
36 Respectfully submitted,
37

38 Jeanne Hollingsworth, Recording Secretary

MARCH CAMDEN DOWNTOWN PLAN WORKING GROUP

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